



# SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY

## NEWSLETTER

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Left: Starrucca House, in about 1900. The cupolas and much of the canopy have been removed. Right: the Great Dining Hall, a view of c1875 from a stereograph, collection of Kathleen Hoeft. *William S Young photocopy.*

### **RAILROAD STATION-HOTELS—A SECOND LOOK**

Railroad structures that were both stations *and* hotels were built in America before sleeping and dining cars came into vogue (roughly 1850s-80s) and made such good sense that there should have been many of them; in fact, there probably were. But those that survived to the 20thC eventually lost their hotel function and came to be regarded only as stations. Enough survivors of the special class, however, have now been discovered that no longer may we label such structures extremely rare.

Small, thought-to-be station-hotels (n.d.) have been found, for example, at Martinsburg and Newburg, W.Va., both B&O, and at Gainsville, Conn. But the most impressive station-hotel to come recently to light is one built in 1875 by the B&O at Chicago Junction [S of Sandusky], Ohio. Renamed "Willard" in 1917 for Daniel Willard, then president of the RR, the town had been established c1872 as a junction point on the freshly laid Pittsburgh-Chicago main line. Built by contractors Dougherty & Ferguson, the station-hotel was quickly followed by a roundhouse and other service facilities.

The B&O unquestionably was the most assiduous builder of grand RR station-hotels, for it erected at least 3 others, all at important junctions. The one at Chicago Junction may have been its last, although the RR did build resort hotels slightly later. Like the majority of others, it is loosely described as "Victorian Italianate" and like the B&O's late Grafton [W.Va.] House—a strikingly similar building—(1857, additions 1872) and Viaduct House (1872), Relay, Md., this station-hotel is in plan comprised of three rectangular blocks arranged in diminishing scale within a general T shape—apparently a functional design to fit the site since all three buildings were wedged into the Y of a railroad junction.

Portions of the building at Willard still are used by the B&O

for their original purpose as freight offices but the passenger station and hotel functions no longer survive. It is in good condition and recently was nominated to the Natl Register by the Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland.

Another Station-hotel, the Erie's magnificent Starrucca House (c1865), at Susquehanna, Penna., is by no means a recent discovery but it is news. Unlike the elegant Queen City (B&O, 1872), Cumberland, Md., razed in 1971 despite a fierce preservation battle, it seems that this station-hotel is destined for rehabilitation and adaptive use. Starrucca House is unique as a station-hotel, not merely because it survives, but because it may be the oldest, largest, and only Gothic Revival example to remain. Also, it stands as part of a RR complex along with a group of contemporary stone repair shops.

It was essentially abandoned by the RR late in the 1960s. It was recorded in 1971 by HAER and a local group formed to save it. In 1972 it was entered on the Natl Register. Now a Station Subcommittee of the newly constituted Susquehanna Depot Area Mayor's Council on the Arts has taken it in hand, engaging the Philadelphia firm Day & Zimmerman to prepare



Baltimore & Ohio RR station-hotel, 1875, Willard, Ohio. *Western Reserve Historical Society photograph by Eric Johannesen.*

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